moving and evocative ways, Dora Dueck encourages flashes of timelessness rather than the predictability of conventional plots.

Margaret Steffler
Trent University

Sarah Ens, *The World is Mostly Sky.* Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2020. Pp 112. Softcover, $17.

Sarah Ens, *Flyway.* Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2022. Pp. 120. Softcover, $18.

The World is Mostly Sky, published by Turnstone in 2020, is the debut poetry collection of Sarah Ens, and is made up of deeply personal reflections of selfhood, as it considers the sky, the realm of halcyon, happiness, and bird. It is, in ways, a prelude to *Flyway,* her second publication with Turnstone in 2022, a long poem that considers the migratory paths of birds and heritage.

The World is Mostly Sky opens with the images of a child losing a deciduous tooth, of a nest and shattered eggs, introducing a vivid recollection of childhood, lost innocence, coming of age, and the attentive observations of speaker and poet. Ens's artful engagement with space, line breaks, enjambments, and short lines in free verse, or the longer lines of prose, offer disclosures of a childhood and community, its silos both literal and metaphorical, and its traditions, set in a "time before condos built up / all around [my] hometown . . . when [I] believed in secrets" (22). The book's second section explores the body as "a house to fail, / to pray in" (37), as the site of the "in-breaking divine" (37), and as the body *within* a body of water, impossible to dive into "without breaching / changed" (43). Ens's closing section proclaims "something has happened to all of us . . . It helps to say it happened, to do this in remembrance. It helps to say: this body, this blood. To say me too, me too" (75).

It is this long poem form that distinguishes this poet's work as her lyric voice soars. "Wuthering: A Comprehensive Field Guide" (written under the influence of *Wuthering Heights*, the poet explains in the notes), unfurls as a meditation of the body, its hush, its youthful awakening, and desires. "You found the body, mid-dive, trying for lake," she writes. "The body lets you think you found it yourself" (52). Embodiment is privileged as the site of perception/reality. Heritage, God, myth, popular culture, art, and death are all made particular through experience as the speaker learns "to sit still with what it is in me and forgive myself for it" (62), as she asks questions,

such as one in a poem about Marilyn Monroe: "How do you find your way back in the dark?" (62).

That question, more broadly considered, is taken up and expanded upon in the long poem form in Ens's second publication. *Flyway* weaves together themes of ecology, identity, and migration, paying homage to "this patch of tallgrass" in Manitoba—the last remaining one percent of the world's tallgrass—while assembling a narrative of settler and Russian Mennonite history, a history Ens admits is complex. The poem is structured into parts, as if call and response, beginning and ending with psalmodies, as though sung by the birds. "Tallgrass Psalmody, Part One" opens the work by asking, "What brings you to nest?" (11), and precedes "Flight, 1929–1945," the story of Anni, the speaker's (and poet's) grandmother. "Tallgrass Psalmody, Part Two" asks, "What called you home?" (61), and precedes Anni's response in "Un/Settling, 1948–." The poem concludes with "Tallgrass Psalmody, Part Three," asking, "What story are you telling? Whose?" (97).

Flyway is the biographical story of "three women flying with what [they] could carry" (57) and the home they found. Told in a trio of female voices, Anna, Anni, and Anni's granddaughter, the poem is rendered from memory and oral stories and from old letters. However, rather than a work of non-fiction, it is, as Ens insists, a creative re-imagining. Among the questions asked in this work, first by a young German named Hans to his sister Anni as he is conscripted (48), and later by Oma (Anni), is "How do you remember home?" (100). Ens moves from grounding the family history in narrative to lifting it by the poetic devices of white space, line breaks, and the structure of open field. The result is highly effective: the details and gaps work in tension, the narrative like lines on the hydro pole that hold the lyricism, the poetry like birds rising from the wire, airborne.

Throughout this work Ens attends to those stories passed down through generations of Mennonites, stories of "the black ravens of that place" in Russia, of war and loss, of departure and arrival, and of figures like Hans, the young German soldier with "a swastika spun / round his arm" (46). Supplemented by actual letters from Hans in exile, the work is, in turn, narrated by the women family members, although Ens also borrows from the voice of an anonymous woman in Marlene Epp's work *Women without Men*. In one powerful section, a woman in the prairie church sanctuary reflects on "repenting her life / during the war . . . [and] her children born of soldiers," noting that "if she resisted [the soldiers] she would lose / the last two children" (83). And here and there, in the fashion of Mennonite migration stories concerning "war / revolution / war /

hunger / exile" (74), are hints at what continues to remain silent within family stories: "Nazis through Zaporizhzhia advancing, now and again / a hushed word about our Jewish neighbours" (33); "we scarcely heard of the atrocities committed / against native Ukrainians or Jews" (87). Such stories have yet to be more fully integrated within European Mennonite and Russian Mennonite migration narratives.

Ens, two generations removed from the post-war Mennonite migration, is of the generation now interrogating migration/settler stories to Canada, and reflects on her own home and childhood in Treaty 1 Territory and the disappearing swaths of Manitoba's tallgrass, home to nesting birds, winged and human, each named with a birdwatcher's attention. In the introduction to *Flyway* Ens writes, "I am here to think about grass & birds. To ask & look & listen. I am here a descendent of Mennonite settlers in the land of the Anishinaabeg, Assiniboine, Dakota, & Cree, the homeland of the Métis" (3). Together, *The World is Mostly Sky* and *Flyway* tell stories of both settling and unsettling, the word *unsettling* here with all its multiple meanings. Together they map the tallgrass prairie, Manitoba, a coming of age in this place, as well as Ukraine of the 1930s and '40s, and the promising flight path of a young Canadian lyric poet.

Connie T. Braun
Vancouver, British Columbia

Robert Boschman, *White Coal City: A Memoir of Place and Family*. Regina: University of Regina Press, 2021. Pp. 328. Softcover, $21.95.

One of the best scholars on memoir that I know of, Leigh Gilmore, remarks that this genre really asks a lot of the writer: one is to be both representative and individual. Places and sites of emergence need to come alive as much as the memoirist. Robert Boschman has written such a memoir, one that vividly delivers the smells, sights, sounds, and hurts of place and history. Set in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, predominantly in the 1960s and '70s, *White Coal City* not only captures the history of the Boschman family—a Mennonite family of modest means who live in and operate the King Koin laundry—but also that of settler colonialism in its past and ongoing forms of violence. Boschman's Prince Albert (PA) is punishingly rough, geographically trapped in "a circle of pain" that includes "a federal penitentiary, two provincial corrections units . . . , a former